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## GENERAL NOTES

## ANOTHER OPOSSUM TAKEN IN VERMONT

In the May, 1921, issue of the *Journal of Mammalogy* the writer recorded the taking of an opossum at East Dorset, Vermont, the previous December. Another of the animals, a large male, was captured in a fox trap late in October, 1921, at Mount Horrid in Rochester, Vermont, by Dexter W. Kathan of Putney, Vermont. The second animal was taken about 45 miles north of the scene of the first capture. Both opossums had withstood considerable cold weather and snow. How they got into northern New England is an unsolved mystery, as inquiry in many sources has failed to disclose any one who has had them in captivity.—GEORGE L. KIRK, *Rutland, Vermont.*

SOME HABITS OF THE PRAIRIE MOLE, *SCALOPUS AQUATICUS MACHRINUS*

The prairie mole (*Scalopus aquaticus machrinus*) is not uncommon along the Mississippi and lower Wisconsin Rivers in southwestern Wisconsin, where it particularly favors the more sandy bottomlands above high water. At a place known as White City Resort, which lies about 1½ miles north of the Illinois-Wisconsin boundary, and almost directly across the Mississippi from the most northerly parts of the city of Dubuque, Iowa, one was trapped in a Nash mole-trap the evening of August 5, 1920. Only a portion of the skin of the flank of the mole was caught in the trap, so the animal was practically uninjured, and I was able to keep him alive and make a few observations on his habits until the next morning, when it became necessary to prepare him for preservation in the U. S. Biological Survey Collection.

The mole exhibited all the strength accredited to his tribe. The cover of my heavy field telescope weighed probably 10 pounds, yet he easily moved it with his powerful fore legs when crowding between it and the wall. His efforts were always to dig down, or follow along the edge of a board, or under some object. Contact over his entire back seemed in a measure to answer the purpose of his runway, but contact on only a small part of his back acted as an irritant. I laid a mattress on the floor and he took particular delight in "digging under" it. He would raise the mattress and crawl its entire length; and under this mattress was his favorite resting place. I put him in a sink and he seemed particularly attracted to the drain holes, placing his nose first in one little circular opening then in another, and at times resting for 15 or 20 minutes with his nose in one of the little holes in the drain-pipe sieve. His method of defense was mostly by pushing away the offender with his powerful fore feet, and, in his efforts to accomplish this, he would frequently follow the point of attack around over his back, and roll entirely over. He would, of course, use his teeth occasionally, but not persistently. He did not care for raisins, bat flesh, or cucumber rind, but ate a few cracker crumbs, and especially relished uncooked rolled oats, of which he ate what seemed a prodigious amount for such a small mammal. While he was eating, his proboscis-like nose came into play, it being used to locate each grain of oatmeal and to draw the food into the mouth, not unlike the way an elephant would use its trunk.—HARTLEY H. T. JACKSON, *U. S. Biological Survey, Washington, D. C.*

## A BAT NEW FOR CALIFORNIA

Through the courtesy of H. E. Wilder, two specimens of *Corynorhinus rafinesquii townsendii* (Cooper) have come into my possession. They are Nos. FX 18 and GX 54 of my collection. Both are males, the first taken April 14, 1918, and the second taken August 3, 1919, at Carlotta, Humboldt County, California, by Mr. Wilder. Dr. Joseph Grinnell, of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, has been good enough to examine these specimens and concurs in the subspecific determination. This form has not, I believe, been hitherto detected within the confines of California.—DONALD R. DICKEY, *Pasadena, California*.

## A CORRECTION

In the November issue of this magazine (Journ. Mamm., vol. 2, p. 234) I referred a mongoose from Kentucky to *Herpestes griseus* E. Geoffroy. In doing so I had compared the Kentucky animal with specimens from the West Indies previously identified as *griseus*. Dr. Glover M. Allen has very kindly called to my attention that the mongoose now so common in certain of the West Indies is not *H. griseus*, but *H. birmanicus*. More careful examination of the specimens from the West Indies used as the comparative material shows that they are *birmanicus*. The mongoose from Kentucky should therefore be referred to *Herpestes birmanicus* Thomas.—HARTLEY H. T. JACKSON, *Biological Survey: Washington, D. C.*

## A BROWN RAT KILLS A RATTLER

The following observation on *Rattus norvegicus* was made by two friends of the writer, Messrs. Martin and Otting, at their camp on the Colorado River above Austin, Texas, July 15, 1921, and would seem to deserve record in this Journal.

In the middle of the hot afternoon the rat was seen in the short, dry grass some twenty feet from the tent. Instead of scampering for cover as usual at the slightest sound emanating from human presence, the rat engaged in peculiar antics which attracted further attention. Closer inspection disclosed the fact that a mortal combat was in progress between the rat and a two-foot rattlesnake. Curiously enough, a second rat sat nearby so intent upon the rattler that it, too, was entirely oblivious of extraneous noises.

When first seen the serpent had already received two wounds some eight or ten inches from the tip of the tail, apparently through the backbone, for the caudal extremity was paralyzed. The rattler struck repeatedly at the rat, sometimes missing because of the agility of the latter, sometimes knocking it over on its side, but never closing upon it with its fangs. Occasionally the rat would leap over the snake's head and inflict skin wounds upon its antagonist. Finally, after about ten minutes of this give-and-take fight, in which the rat panted tremendously in the broiling sun, the rattler drooped its head for a moment as if to rest; whereupon the rat leaped upon the snake like a flash and won the battle by a single gash of its sharp incisors into its head, the snake wilting instantly. The rat was then dispatched with a shotgun. The snake was a diamond rattler (*Crotalus atrox*) and had two rattles and a "button."

A similar incident was related by Mr. Chas. H. Hamby concerning the prairie brush rat (doubtless *Neotoma*) which gathers large mounds of sticks, grass, dry cow-dung and the like for its nest. Sometimes possession of the nest is successfully disputed by rattlesnakes, which formerly infested the Driscoll Ranch (now in cultivation) 25 miles southeast of Austin, where the observation was made. Mr. Hamby describes the rat as the chief aggressor in the battle witnessed by him. The snake never struck, but confined its activities chiefly to attempts at escaping. It would coil up while the rat would stalk round and round until a favorable opportunity presented itself when the rat would pounce upon the coiled mass and bite furiously. Thereupon the snake would attempt to escape only to coil up again for defense. This procedure was repeated until the snake collapsed; and even after this the rat bit the snake a dozen times before leaving the field of battle. During the fight both snake and rat seemed perfectly oblivious of the observer's presence.

Doubtless the ferocity of the brown rat is a character which makes for its survival and spread, as contrasted with its competitors. Perhaps it is the attenuation of this character in the albino which renders this form impossible to feralize, as five unsuccessful attempts by Donaldson (Wistar Institute) have shown.<sup>1</sup>—  
CARL HARTMAN, *The University of Texas, Austin, Texas.*

#### WOODLAND JUMPING MOUSE NEAR TUXEDO, NEW YORK

On the morning of September 4, 1920, at the boy scout camp in the Interstate Park, some six miles east of Tuxedo, New York, I found in a mouse trap set the evening before an adult male of *Napaeozapus insignis*. This particular trap had been placed in some low woods near a small burrow opening beneath a clump of bushes, and the wire loop had struck the mouse only at the base of the tail. The night had been cool; and this had doubtless a marked effect upon the behavior of the jumping mouse, for the trap had been dragged only four feet. Its victim when found was in the sleepy condition of hibernation, showing the result of the lowered temperature even at this early date, for it became active again when warmed.

The only previous records of this species of which I am aware, anywhere in the vicinity of New York City, are those of Mr. Rhoads at Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey,<sup>2</sup> and of Doctor Mearns in the Catskill Mountains, New York.<sup>3</sup> According to Mr. Rhoads this jumping mouse is found in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey in parts of the upper transition zone where no "boreal islands" exist, and certainly the spot where the present example was captured had no particularly boreal aspect.—JAMES P. CHAPIN, *American Museum of Natural History, New York.*

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished data, in addition to the following: Donaldson, Henry H., 1916, "Experiment on the feralization of the albino rat;" Carnegie Yearbook No. 15 of the Carnegie Inst., pp. 200-201.

<sup>2</sup> S. N. Rhoads, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia, 1897, p. 29; Mammals of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, 1903, p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. E. A. Mearns, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., vol. 21, 1898, p. 348.

## WANTED—DATA ON THE RED SQUIRREL

I am getting together material for a monograph on the red squirrel and I should be grateful for any data on this species. Any accurate information, no matter how fragmentary, will be welcome. I should be particularly glad of notes on family life. First-hand accounts, with all details, of destruction of birds or eggs by this species are desirable, and equally desirable are data on cases where red squirrels have *not* molested nests when the opportunity offered. References to literature which the reader believes to be relatively inaccessible will be appreciated, verbatim quotations, with exact citation of publication, preferred. It is perhaps hardly necessary to state that full credit will be given for all information used.—A. BROOKER KLUGH, *Queen's University, Kingston, Canada.*

## THE CORRECT NAME OF THE WEST AFRICAN PYGMY SQUIRREL

Du Chaillu was the discoverer of the West African pygmy squirrel and has also been credited with its original description as *Sciurus minutus* (Proc. Boston Soc. Nat. Hist., VII, 1860, p. 366). Later Major (Proc. Zool. Soc. London, 1893, pp. 181, 187, 189 and 215) included it among his *Nannosciurinae*, but without separating it generically from the East Indian or South American representatives of that subfamily. It remained thus *Nannosciurus minutus* (Du Chaillu) until Thomas (Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist., (8) III, 1909, pp. 469, 474 and 475) created a new genus *Myosciurus* for the West African form, with *Sciurus minutus* Du Chaillu as type by monotypy. Hollister (Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, XXXIV, 1921, p. 135) changed this name to *Myosciurus minutulus* on the ground that Du Chaillu's name was preoccupied by *Sciurus minutus* Lartet, a fossil species.

Accepting Hollister's revision as correct, I later happened to compare Leconte's descriptions of mammals from the Du Chaillu collection. I came to the conclusion that Leconte's *Sciurus pumilio* fitted the West African pygmy squirrel and could in no way be identical with, as Trouessart supposed, his *S. subviridescens* (= *Aethosciurus poensis*). Hollister, to whom I communicated my findings, asked me then to prepare this note for publication.

Witmer Stone of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia kindly informed me that though they have a number of mammals collected by Du Chaillu, there is no specimen positively identifiable as Leconte's *Sciurus pumilio*. Glover M. Allen, who is sure that the type of *Sciurus minutus* Du Chaillu is not in the Cambridge Museum, supposes that Du Chaillu went first to Philadelphia and left his specimens with Leconte, who then was the first to describe *Sciurus pumilio* (Proc. Ac. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia, IX, 1857, p. 11). Three years later, as stated above, Du Chaillu's own description appeared without any mention of Leconte's previous work.

Trouessart seems to be responsible for the confusion. In his first catalogue and in subsequent references he places *pumilio* in the subgenus *Heliosciurus*: *Sciurus (Heliosciurus) pumilio* (Bull. Soc. Et. Sci. Angers, X, 1, 1880, p. 84; Le Naturaliste, I, no. 37, 1880, p. 292; *op. cit.*, no. 40, 1880, p. 315; Bull. U. S. Geol. Geogr. Surv. Terr., IV, no. 2, 1881, p. 306). He finally disposes of *pumilio* in his second catalogue (Cat. Mamm. Viv. Foss., 1897, p. 406) as a synonym of *Xerus (Paraxerus) poensis*, connecting "*pumilio et subviridescens*." From then on *pumilio* disappears from the literature.

Considering the above facts I can see no reason why *pumilio* should not stand and why *Myosciurus pumilio* (Leconte) has not priority over other names. *Myosciurus minutus* (Du Chaillu) and *Myosciurus minutulus* Hollister should be considered synonyms.—HERBERT LANG, *American Museum of Natural History, New York.*

#### MAGPIE AS SENTINEL FOR RABBITS

The following note sent me by Capt. Henry Savile of Cheltenham, England, shows that the magpie serves the British rabbits much as our bluejay does several American fourfoots.

"I saw rather an interesting little thing the other day, showing that wild animals do communicate with each other. In the center of a large field was a rabbit warren. One evening, while dressing for dinner, I saw a black stable cat stalking the bunnies. Just before it got within springing distance, and as it was lashing its tail from side to side, from a small coppice, out flew two magpies, gave a cry and every rabbit disappeared. I saw this six nights running, and my host told me it had been the same every night for some time."—ERNEST THOMPSON SETON, *Greenwich, Conn.*

#### DEATH OF CHARLES B. CORY

Charles Barney Cory, well known as one of the most prominent of American ornithologists, died in Ashland, Wisconsin, July 31, 1921. Although chiefly devoted to the study of birds, he had given considerable time to mammals and, especially by the production of his book on the "Mammals of Illinois and Wisconsin," had placed all mammalogists in his debt.

He was born in Boston, January 31, 1857, and was descended from old New England stock. His interest in natural history began in his teens and before he was twenty he had formed a considerable collection of birds. For many years he was possessed of an ample fortune which permitted him to follow his naturalist's bent without let or hindrance. A large share of his attention in earlier life was given to Florida and the West Indies. His collections from these regions, although mainly ornithological, included many mammals, quite a number of which are still preserved in the Field Museum. He was the first to call attention to the differentiation of the Florida cougar to which he gave the name *Felis floridana*. This name being preoccupied, it was renamed in his honor, *Felis coryi*.

For the last fifteen years of his life, after having suffered the loss of his fortune, he held the responsible position of curator of zoology in the Field Museum of Natural History of Chicago. Here he labored most assiduously in the study of birds and, after considerable other work, engaged in the preparation of a series of volumes under the title "Birds of the Americas," only two parts of which had appeared at the time of his death. Among his earlier books were many known to naturalists the world over, as "Birds of the Bahamas," "Beautiful and Curious Birds of the World," "Birds of Haiti and San Domingo," "Birds of the West Indies," "Birds of Illinois and Wisconsin," "Hunting and Fishing in Florida," and "Naturalist in the Magdalen Islands."

He was a man of jovial disposition, fond of a good story, fond of music, fond of games of all kinds and interested in many things besides natural history. As a young man he gave much time to outdoor sports and in middle life he became passionately devoted to the game of golf in which he attained exceptional skill. Throughout a varied and active life, his love for animals, especially birds, was maintained to the end.—W. H. Osgood, *Chicago, Ill.*